DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 829 FL 022 748

AUTHOR Malcolm, Ian G.
TITLE Issues in the Maintenance of Aboriginal Languages and Aboriginal English.
PUB DATE Oct 94
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual National Languages Conference of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers' Associations (10th Perth, Western Australia, Australia, October 1-4, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education; *English; Foreign Countries; *Indigenous Populations; *Language Maintenance; *Language Planning; Language Variation; *Native Language Instruction; Program Descriptions; Public Policy; *Regional Dialects; Standard Spoken Usage
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; Edith Cowan University (Australia)

ABSTRACT

Activities at Edith Cowan University (Australia) in support of the maintenance of Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English are discussed. Discussion begins with an examination of the concept of language maintenance and the reasons it merits the attention of linguists, language planners, and language teachers. Australian policy concerning maintenance of Aboriginal languages is briefly outlined. Research on language maintenance and language shift in relation to endangered languages is also reviewed, and the ambiguous role of education in language maintenance is considered. Two areas in which Edith Cowan University has been active are then described. The first is a pilot study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language development and maintenance needs and activities, a national initiative with its origins in national language and literacy policy. The second is an effort to mobilize teachers for bidialectal education, in both Aboriginal English and standard spoken English. The project involves the training of 20 volunteer teachers of Aboriginal children. The role of the university in facilitating change and supporting language maintenance is emphasized. Contains 13 references. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 378 829

ISSUES IN THE MAINTENANCE OF ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES AND ABORIGINAL ENGLISH

Ian G. Malcolm

Edith Cowan University

Paper presented to the 10th National Languages Conference of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers' Associations, Sheraton Hotel, Perth, 1-4 October, 1994.

FL023748

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

I.G. Malcolm

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

I want in this paper to discuss work that has been going on at Edith Cowan University in support of the maintenance of Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English. Before saying something about two specific projects which are currently underway, and about their implications, I would like to discuss the concept of language maintenance and the reasons why I consider it merits the attention of linguists, language planners and language teachers.

Why is Language Maintenance an Issue?

It is not difficult in the company of language teachers to find support for the concept of language maintenance. Language teachers may well perceive themselves to be agents of language maintenance for society. While this may be true, it is not necessarily so, and, since the predators which endanger languages are, essentially, other stronger languages, it could be argued that language teachers are agents not of language maintenance, but of its opposite: language shift.

Indeed, the biological analogy is commonly used today to show that languages are natural phenomena which are just as threatened by extinction as are pandas, elephants and whales, and for similar reasons. The economic and social conditions which are associated with present day living have caused an encroachment of introduced linguistic species into the domains which, over untold centuries, favoured the development of unique and exquisitely adapted local varieties of linguistic communication (see, e.g., Robins and Uhlenbeck, 1991).

But, if a language which is no longer used, goes, what does it matter? It might be argued that it has served its purpose and that nobody will be likely ever to want to learn it, and it should make way for languages that are more useful for modern life. Languages, in this view, are perhaps, able to be compared to clothes, or cars, or computers, which get superseded. But does that view do justice to any language? Stephen Wurm has argued that:

> "Every language reflects a unique world-view and culture complex mirroring the manner in which a speech community has resolved its problems in dealing with the world, and has formulated its thinking, its system of philosophy and understanding of the world around it. With the death of the language.an irreplaceable unit in our knowledge and understanding of human thought and world-view has been lost forever." (1991:17)

Languages, according to this view, are worth maintaining whether or not , in the context of the priorities imposed by present socio-economic conditions and theories, they are seen as useful, viable or valuable. Every language is, as it were, a research report about life, compiled by a longstanding succession of generations of researchers.

Language maintenance is an issue wherever a community which has used a language finds the functions that language used to perform for them being overtaken by another language. What threatens the language usually threatens much more than the language: in particular the core values and identity-laden associations which the language has carried for its speakers.

One of the impediments to language maintenance is migration, so many Australians have had to face the possibility of loss of their mother tongue. We have therefore developed, from the community level upwards, a support infrastructure for community languages, involving special schools, community activities, publications, broadcasting, cultural events and bilingual services to enable languages of relatively small numbers of speakers to survive in this overwhelmingly English speaking environment.

While we have been relatively successful in maintaining some of the languages for which our community is not solely responsible, that is, languages which have an overseas base (see Clyne and Kipp, 1994), we have been particularly unsuccessful in maintaining the languages for which Australia is the sole home, that is, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. According to Professor Bob Dixon of the Australian National University,

> "Most of the original languages of Australia are already extinct and almost all the remainder will soon follow" (1991:229-230).

Of, perhaps 250 languages spoken here two hundred years ago, we may have left only ten percent by the end of the next hundred years, even if we do belatedly take some effective steps towards language maintenance. This, then, is primarily why language maintenance is an issue for Australia.

Language Maintenance and Australian Language Policy

One of the primary objectives of language policy in Australia over the last ten years has been the maintenance of Aboriginal languages. The 1984 Report on a National Language Policy, produced by the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, contained 16 recommendations on Australian Aboriginal languages, including recommendations to further the study and description of endangered languages and the documentation and teaching, through bilingual education, of surviving languages. The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (1991:19) laid down as the third of its four overall goals that:

> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages should be maintained and developed where they are still transmitted. Other languages should be assisted in an appropriate way, for example, through recording. These activities should only occur where the speakers so desire and in consultation with their community, for the benefit of the descendants of their speakers and for the nation's heritage.

More recently, the Department of Employment, Education and Training, in its brochure Getting the Word Out, indicated that

> To try and ensure that no more Aboriginal languages are lost and that existing languages continue to be used, a series of special projects will work for Aboriginal language maintenance (1992:11).

(It is essentially one such project which is to be featured later in this paper.)

The national policy statements have their reflection in state policies. In the Western Australian language policy document (Kaldor and Malcolm, 1988) there were 14 recommendations on Aboriginal languages including recommendations for the establishment of bilingual and language maintenance programmes in schools.

Language maintenance is, then, recognized as an issue and action on language maintenance has been enshrined in language policy. We are, however, still in the early stages of clarifying what we mean by language maintenance for Aboriginal people, let alone of achieving it.

What Do We Know About Language Maintenance and Language Shift in Relation to Endangered Languages?

There is an extensive literature on language maintenance and language shift, based on studies in widely separated parts of the world. A number of writers have attempted to sum up the factors associated with these phenomena, though most have to admit to a lingering element of unpredictability. Fasold (1984) in a survey of some well known studies, noted that language shift tended to be associated with social change, where small community values were giving way to wider community values. Often, changing employment possibilities are involved, and consequent upward mobility. The members of the community who were in the process of language shift would typically have some self-consciousness about the identity which was associated with their first language, and would be tolerating an increasing number of transfer features from the dominant second language into it. The shift would be hastened by education by medium of the second language and by marriage outside of the first-language speaking community. Where this happened, an *intergenerational shift* would occur, that is, the children of the marriage would not use the first language.

Language maintenance, on the other hand, tended to be found in communities which were geographically isolated, united in their sense of socio-cultural identity and in their religious or core values and, if they were bilingual, accustomed to the complementary use of one language for certain domains and the other language for others. Holmes (1972:71) reviews the factors which assist the maintenance of a community language as seven:

- group identity being symbolized by the language,
- close proximity and intensive interaction between speakers,
- community bodies (e.g. churches, shops, societies) using the language,
- contact with the homeland
- discouragement of intermarriage,

and institutional support (e.g., from schools, government and the media).

Some of these factors are relevant to Aboriginal Australia and some are not. Stephen Wurm (1991) has listed among factors responsible for language death and disappearance in Australia the death of all speakers, political influence and conquest and changes in the ecology of languages. Dixon (1991:236) sees four predominant reasons for Aboriginal language loss: White insistence, Aboriginal choice, shift of cultural emphasis and media pressure. As to language maintenance, Wurm (1991) makes the interesting observation that, in the face of oppression such as Aboriginal people have suffered in Australia, the language may be retained as a secret language which serves as a symbol of defiance. He writes:

> Some Australian Aboriginal languages in southeastern Australia, believed to be largely extinct in the 1950s, were found by the present writer to be (at least in rudimentary forms) in common use as secret languages to hide their speakers' actions and intentions from the police (whom Aboriginals regarded as their arch-enemies, because it was their job to enforce the tough drinking laws of the day which forbade the consumption of alcohol by most Aboriginals). This ability to derive advantages from being able to speak a language which their oppressors do not understand, serves also as a strong booster of the self esteem of people who find themselves in an inferior position. (p. 15).

The Ambiguous Role of Education

One of the factors which we observed as favouring language shift is education. Where children are not hearing their mother tongue at all at school, and where learning has to take place in the second language, they may become habitual users of the second language with the peer group and even at home. There is no doubt that education can be an agent of language shift. However, we also noticed that Holmes had listed institutional support (which may come from schools) as one of the factors which can favour language maintenance. Education can bring prestige and functional extension to the mother tongue, as well as making it the carrier of literacy. Education is, then, an ambiguous factor with respect to language maintenance.

A number of studies have focused on minority communities whose languages have been brought into the educational system through bilingual programmes. The results are not clearcut. Richard Benton (1984) reviewed bilingual programmes in the Maori language operating in schools in New Zealand. Although all the programmes he reviewed had been introduced in response to community initiatives,

most of the communities who had wanted them introduced were ambivalent with respect to the importance of Maori language vis à vis English. They used a lot of English in the community, and it was impossible for the school programme to bring about a greater level of communicative use of the language than obtained in the community. As Benton put it, "By itself, bilingual education can only ensure the survival of the Maori language in the classroom" (p. 264), and such a survival would be short lived. Moreover, the success of the programme in the eyes of the community members was judged at least as much on how well their children learned English as on how well they functioned in Maori. Benton's study concluded that there were four conditions for success of bilingual education, and these had as much to do with social as with educational policy:

1. Maori must become "a living language (for hours, not minutes, at a time) on radio and television, and books and magazines, written in Maori, excellently produced, and catering for a diversity of interests [must] be widely available" (p. 263).
2. Maori speakers must know they have the right to use their language in dealing with Government agencies, including courts of law.
3. Maori language would need to be "a medium for teaching other subjects equally favoured with English in curriculum development, material resources and teaching staff" (p. 263)
4. Maori language must not only strengthen Maori identity but also provide opportunities for Maori economic development.

Nancy Hornberger (1988) reported on the language maintenance implications of a bilingual education programme for Quechua speaking people in Peru. In this case, of course, the prestige language was Spanish. The bilingual programme was educationally successful, but, after it had run experimentally for three years the community decided to close it down. Hornberger concluded that, despite the educational success that can be achieved with bilingual programmes, "schools cannot be agents for language maintenance if their communities, for whatever reason, do not want them to be"

(1988:229). Why did the community reject the programme? The reason was not that the community rejected the Quechua language, but that they perceived the role of the school as to enable their children to learn Spanish. Hornberger, like Benton, arrived at several principles which would need to be observed for a bilingual education programme to be successful:

> "First, introduction of Quechua in the school would have to be at community members' request rather than imposed from outside; second, it would have to be not experimental, but universal; and third, the primary reward systems of the society would have to reinforce it in order for community members to seek it." (1988:234-5)

A number of principles recur constantly in the literature on bilingual programmes with minority groups. It is clear that bilingual education itself is no guarantee of language maintenance. Rather, the policy settings of the society as a whole need to be clear, and need to favour the significance of maintenance of the minority language. And language maintenance will not be achieved by the education system unless it works with, and as the servant of , the community whose language is in question. The most successful bilingual education programmes have been those which have favoured community ownership and have included training and employment of members of the community in carrying out the programme (see, e.g., Watahomigie and Yamamoto, 1987).

The NBEET Review of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maintenance and Development Needs and Activities

On 29th May, 1993 the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and the Australian Language and Literacy Council advertised for a consultant to carry out a project described as a "pilot study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language development and maintenance needs and activities." The proposed project was in response to the Australian Language and Literacy Policy which had "identified a need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages which are still transmitted to be maintained and developed." Edith Cowan University's bid to carry out the project was successful and Dr Graham McKay was appointed Project Officer.

The terms under which this project was to be undertaken required two tasks to be carried out: a pilot study of four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language communities in which indigenous

languages were being successfully maintained and developed, and a report on successful indigenous languages programmes in Australia and overseas. The project has not yet been completed, so this paper does not constitute a report on it. However I shall outline the directions which have been taken and some of the implications for our understanding of language maintenance in Australia.

In consultation with a national steering committee and with linguists and community members attached to regional language centres, four communities in widely separated parts of Australia were chosen in which to carry out the pilot study. These were Saibai Island in the Torres Strait, Borroloola in the Barkly Tableland, Northern Territory, Ringers Soak in the south-west Kimberley, and Sherwood, near Kempsey in Northern New South Wales, where the Gumbaynggir community is located. Dr McKay made two visits to each community within the first half of 1994 and worked together with Aboriginal facilitators as well as with specialist linguists and community members to investigate the extent to which, and the means by which, the local languages were being maintained. A preliminary report on findings was presented to the Australian Language Institute in July 1994 (McKay and McConvell, 1994). What I shall say here draws on this paper as well as on other work in progress by Dr McKay.

The first issue which comes through is that the degree of language maintenance differs from community to community. McKay and McConvell (1994) distinguished with respect to the communities studied two levels of language maintenance: *maintenance*, where speakers of all ages use the Aboriginal language as a first language every day, and *post-maintenance*, where the level of language shift and language loss has been so great that the language is no longer in full community use. Two of the communities studied (Saibai and Ringers Soak) were in a maintenance state, and the other two (Borroloola and Kempsey) in a post-maintenance state.

A second observation is that every community has its own language ecology, and that different factors will have a particular bearing on different areas. A highly significant factor in the Torres Strait Islands is the existence of Torres Strait Creole, an English-derived contact language, which is the descendant of Pacific Pidgin English which was brought to the area in the mid-19th century. Among

other things, Torres Strait Creole functions to express Pan-Islander consciousness and separateness from White people. There are therefore powerful forces contributing to its maintenance and consequently setting it, to some extent, in competition with indigenous languages in the area. At the same time, though, the language ecology in the Torres Strait Islands has in recent years been affected by the Mabo decision, which has had the effect of restoring and promoting interest in the indigenous languages of the area.

The traditional languages in a given area may be finely balanced against one another, so that language maintenance activities for one language may not be permitted in an area which is seen to be the territory of another. This has been a limiting factor on some of the language maintenance efforts on behalf of Gumbaynggir language in the Kempsey area.

In all areas studied, some efforts have been made by the local communities to maintain their languages. It is clear, however, that there is a limit to what can be done by dedicated individuals or small groups. Signs may be put up in the language, ceremonies like funerals conducted in the language, community messages put over the radio in the language, children's books and other literature circulated in the language, but ultimately, in a situation where the language is endangered, as Benton observed in the Maori situation, community members need the support of outside institutions to keep their languages alive.

This brings us to the thorny issue of funding. Language maintenance, if it is to be supported institutionally, costs money. It costs money to introduce and maintain bilingual programmes in schools, to train community personnel in linguistic analysis and in the skills of imparting language and culture in school situations. It costs money to sustain research into languages which require grammars and orthographies before they disappear. It costs money to keep community radio in indigenous languages on the air.

Language maintenance involves ongoing concern for funding maintenance, since institutional support for language maintenance depends heavily on Government funding. Problems are commonly experienced with red tape which, for example prevents language centres from receiving Aboriginal

Education Program funds because they are not registered education providers, or causes delays in the receipt of essential funding, or requires that grants be not renewed on the assumption that other sources of funding can be obtained once a programme has been started by Government, when, realistically, there are few if any other sources which can be tapped. The problems are compounded by the fact that the boundaries which determine the administration of funding sources do not correspond to traditional language boundaries, which have no respect for the maps of the colonisers.

Despite the problems, language maintenance is occurring. In the Muurbay Aboriginal Language Centre, near Kempsey, where the Gumbaynggir speakers are all elderly, a language revitalization programme is in progress where intergenerational links are being strengthened and community members are first retrieving the language and culture and then imparting it by way of short presentations in schools. In Saibai, the Anglican church, being an important cultural focus for the island community, is an important agent of language maintenance. Members of the local community are in leadership in the church and bibles, prayer books and church services are in the language. On the other hand, the local radio tends to make extensive use of creole, and English is the medium of instruction in the school. At Ringers Soak, the Catholic Church has been active in promoting the use of Jaru both in its school and in Sunday services. At Borroloola, support comes especially from the Regional Language Centre in Tennant Creek, and older and younger members of the community are brought together in language-focused activities concerned with bush foods and local cultural practices. In this case, the situation is one of language renewal.

It is apparent that the motivation towards language maintenance is strong, although there are formidable impediments, some more controllable than others. Political will could solve many of the bureaucratic problems, though, in times of declining government funding, efforts will need to be redoubled to maintain what support there is. Other problems are embedded in social attitudes. They can change, but perhaps not quickly. As in the situations I referred to earlier in New Zealand and Peru, there is a community expectation of education that, first and foremost, it exists to bring competency in the standard language, so attitudes to bilingual education may be ambivalent. Also, there may be

ambivalence with respect to the responsibility for indigenous language maintenance. In some cases, this is seen only to be the business of the elders. On the other hand, some community members who wish to promote their languages feel that access to research data needed to support maintenance efforts is in the hands of Whites and White institutions.

There is, then, cause for encouragement on some fronts, but there remains a long way to go if equity is to be achieved for the declining number of Australians who are possessors of indigenous languages.

The Maintenance of Aboriginal English

What of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who do not possess indigenous languages? These indeed constitute a majority among their people. Are there any equity considerations with respect to language which need to be pursued on their behalf?
Is the only relevant consideration that of ensuring that they have full mastery of Standard Australian English? Does that adequately carry their identity?

Stephen Wurm has made an interesting observation about the Irish. He writes:

> The Irish have a very strong sense of identity, and as in many other cases, the traditional language of a people has become the symbol of their identity. However, with the Irish, the linguistic symbol of their identity has been transferred to their very pronounced Irish accent in English, at the expense of their traditional Celtic language which is no longer regarded by most Irish as a symbol of their identity (1991:8-9)

What Wurm says of the Irish applies in much the same way, I would argue, to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Aboriginal languages are not for them a symbol of identity, because their lives have been lived outside the context of their use. They are monolingual English speakers. Yet not all of their identity can be expressed through the English that is used by White Australians. English must serve them, then, in two ways: as their language of intercourse with the wider Australian community, and as the linguistic carrier of their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity.

This, I would argue, is one of the reasons for the existence of a clearly-marked and distinctive form of English among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. This social dialect, which is

remarkably consistent across the continent, differs systematically from Standard Australian English in its phonology, morphology, syntax, discourse features and lexico-semantics. It is the first form of English that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children learn to speak, and it remains for them the preferred form for use when they are in the company of members of their own community. The dialect has now been quite extensively researched in several states of Australia, and is referred to as *Aboriginal English*, a term of some ambiguity. The use of this name should not be taken to mean either that it is the way English is spoken by all Aboriginal people, or that it is a single, uniform variety. It is a dialect of English which has not been standardized, and which therefore tolerates a good deal of variation. At the same time, it is rule-governed and non-random in its variation.

Aboriginal English is part of Australia's linguistic heritage. Despite the fact that it is commonly disparaged by non-Aboriginal Australians, and even by some of its own speakers who have accepted the common estimation of it as "rubbish English", it is a highly complex sociolinguistic phenomenon many of the intricacies of which are still awaiting research-based explanation. It varies between heavier and lighter styles, with the heavier styles showing a greater similarity to creole and the lighter styles a greater similarity to standard Australian English. It is a fully-developed English, not a pidgin, yet its distinctive features tend to reflect a past history of pidginization and creolization as well as ongoing transfer from other varieties of English and from Aboriginal vernaculars and creoles.

To many Aboriginal people this, and not the superposed variety which they first encountered in school, is the most immediately communicative form of English, yet at school it is usually not recognized at all. It is either tolerantly ignored or corrected. It is not treated as a culture-carrier or a vehicle of serious discourse. It is not allowed for with respect to the language profile or the developmental profile of the child. It is implicitly treated as if it is of no use and has to be replaced by English like that of the teacher.

What is the effect of this on the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander learner? Paul Black (1993:212) has described the school experience of speakers of Aboriginal languages as being

"confined to interaction in an alien language" and has quoted the Aboriginal educator Mandawuy Yunupingu who said

> ...when they stopped us speaking Yolngu [that is, Aboriginal] language in the school they were stopping our way of thinking (Black, 1993:212).

Some Aboriginal children come to school accustomed to thinking in Aboriginal language and others come to school accustomed to thinking in Aboriginal English. In both cases they encounter in the English of White people an alien way of thinking and their communication and learning is correspondingly inhibited.

I am moving towards an argument, then, that Aboriginal English, like Aboriginal languages must be maintained. It is a culture carrier and a vehicle of thought for which Standard Australian English cannot be substituted. Unlike many indigenous languages, Aboriginal English shows no immediate prospect of language loss (or, in this case, dialect loss), so the kind of support it needs is somewhat different from that needed by the other Aboriginal languages. It needs to be listened to, accepted, and responded to with the respect it deserves. It needs to be given equal status with any other dialect of English as a vehicle of learning and expression.

If this is to happen, there needs to be a change of consciousness in the community and especially in the educational community. As in the case of indigenous language maintenance, institutional change needs to lead the way. This is especially necessary with respect to Aboriginal English because many of its speakers, acquiescing to the surrounding consensus, think it is something to be ashamed of. Schools need to take Aboriginal English seriously and incorporate it as an element in their policy and curriculum planning. A language planning model which has been established for many years in the United States for minority dialect speakers is bidialectal education. Unlike bilingual education, this does not mean teaching by medium of the dialect. Rather, it means recognizing the dialect in the way one teaches. It means letting the child use the dialect, as appropriate, while maintaining the concurrent educational goal of helping the child to acquire proficiency in Standard English.

Language and Communication Enhancement for Two-Way Education

This year, with the help of funding from the Department of Employment, Education and Training, under the Priority (Reserve) scheme, a team based at Edith Cowan University has been attempting to mobilise teachers for bidialectal education. The name of the project uses the expression "two-way education", which has been used in the context of bilingual education in Australia (e.g. Walton and Eggington, 1990) and overseas (e.g. Hornberger, 1988:236), but which has come to express a particular aspiration of Aboriginal people to have an education which will both maintain their cultural traditions and impart Western language and knowledge. It is being used in the context of this project to refer to the objective of allowing for two ways of accessing learning: the Aboriginal way, through Aboriginal English, and the other way, through Standard Australian English.

The project has involved working with 20 volunteer teachers of Aboriginal children. Teachers were sought from schools across the state of Western Australia, and their main qualification for selection was a sense of need. Despite the fact that the project was going to involve them in a good deal of hard work, including one full-time intensive course during their holidays, more teachers volunteered to do the programme than we could accept.

In the first semester a linguistic research team from Edith Cowan visited each of the participating schools and employed standard sociolinguistic elicitation procedures to gather speech samples from Aboriginal children identified by the teachers as exhibiting some linguistic distinctiveness. Field notes, cassette tapes and interview schedules were brought back by the teams from the schools visited and analysed. A schedule was developed to enable both individual children and the school to be profiled in a way which made clear the linguistic significance of the speech variation.

In the mid-year break, all the teachers came in to the University for a week-long intensive course in which they were able to study the analyses of their own students and schools and compare them with those of the other participating schools. They were also trained in linguistic data gathering and analysis, and in linguistic and cultural factors necessary for the understanding of Aboriginal

English. The second half of the course was spent in applying the linguistic knowledge in the development of two-way learning strategies and curricula.

In third term, all the teachers had to carry out action research on the language of their own children and to develop and implement two-way learning strategies in selected areas of the curriculum. They also had to complete reading assignments relating the findings of their own research to the international literature on bidialectal education.

At this stage, the teachers are all still enthusiastically engaged in the project and preparing for a second in-service course at the end of October when they will give tutorial presentations on the results of their linguistic and educational investigations.

This work has the longer term objective of resulting in the development of two formal units of study, one on Aboriginal English and one on Two Way Learning, which will go together with two other units to comprise a Graduate Certificate, or a major within a Graduate Diploma in Bidialectal Education.

As this work has proceeded, a good deal of interest has been aroused among other teachers, and the Education Department of Western Australia, whose Head Office staff have been members of the project team, has set up a bidialectal education advisory team and adopted a strategy of bidialectal education with Aboriginal English speaking children.

Conclusion

This paper started off on a rather pessimistic note, looking at the sobering facts of the loss of so much of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language heritage. The sobering facts remain, but we end, I hope, on an optimistic note. There are things that can be done to promote the maintenance of Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English. One of the obstacles to change is lack of knowledge. Ignorance of the effects of current practice on Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English leads to the acceptance of the conditions which have brought about linguistic and cultural loss. It is the role of

universities to help to break down such lack of knowledge and facilitate change, and government funding can help them to fulfil this role. I think we are moving in the right direction.

REFERENCES

Benton, Richard A. (1984) "Bilingual education and the survival of the Maori language." Journal of the Polynesian Society 93(3):247-266.

Black, Paul (1993) "New uses for old languages." In Michael Walsh and Colin Yallop (eds.) Language and Culture in Aboriginal Australia. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Department of Employment, Education and Training (1991) Australia's Language: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

Department of Employment, Education and Training (1992) Getting the Word Out. Canberra: Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Dixon, R.M.W. (1991) "The endangered languages of Australia, Indonesia and Oceania." In R.H. Robins and E.M.Uhlenbeck (eds.) Endangered Languages. Oxford: Berg.

Fasold, Ralph (1984) The Sociolinguistics of Society Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Holmes, Janet (1992) An Introduction to Sociolinguistics. London: Longman.

Hornberger, Nancy H. (1988) Bilingual Education and Language Maintenance: A Southern Peruvian Quechua Case. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

Kaldor, Susan and Malcolm, Ian (1988) Languages for Western Australians Report on the Ministerial Working Party on the Development of a Policy for the Teaching of Languages Other than English (LOTE) in Western Australian Schools. Perth: Education Department of W.A.

McKay, Graham and McConvell, Patrick (1994) "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language maintenance intervention activities." Paper presented to the Workshop on Language Shift and Maintenance in the Asia Pacific Region, Australian Linguistic Institute, La Trobe University, Melbourne.

Robins, R.H. and Uhlenbeck E.M. (eds.) Endangered Languages. Oxford: Berg.
Walton, Christine and Eggington, William (1990) Language: Maintenance, Power and Education in Australian Aboriginal Contexts Darwin: NTU Press.

Watahomigie, Lucille J. and Yamamoto, Akira Y. (1987) "Linguistics in action: the Hualapai bilingual/bicultural education program." In Donald D. Stull and Jean J. Schensul (eds.) Collaborative Research and Social Change: Applied Anthropology in Action Boulder: Westview Press.

Wurm, Stephen A. (1991) "Language death and disappearance: causes and circumstances." In R.H.Robins and E.M.Uhlenbeck (eds.) Endangered Languages Oxford: Berg.